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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to identify useful methods for measuring progress in English language proficiency among students at the Yemen-America Language Institute (YALI) in Sana'a, Yemen. The study examined factors critical to such progress as well as the profiles of student attitudes and demographic characteristics. A questionnaire was administered to the student body, and other student data were collected. Measures of English language learning progress included: gains on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) over two terms; YALI grades; and attendance. Factors expected to influence language learning progress were: age; number of dependents; motivation; self-esteem; learning style; and level of enrollment in YALI. Results show a negative correlation between age, number of dependents, and TOEFL gain. There was a positive correlation between motivation and self-esteem, associated with high TOEFL gain rather than low. A negative correlation between enrollment level and TOEFL gain was indicated for those with low gain. Learning style and enrollment level showed a positive correlation for those with high gain. These results suggest that students in the program who succeed in class are highly motivated and able to adjust their learning styles, characteristics that promote academic success. However, no one characteristic correlates positively with TOEFL gain. Construction of an academic readiness measure is recommended. (Author/MSE)

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YEMENI STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND LANGUAGE PROGRESS

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INDEX

1.	<u>SUMMARY</u>	Page 1
2.	<u>BACKGROUND</u>	2
3.	<u>STATEMENT OF PROBLEM</u>	3
4.	<u>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</u>	5
5.	<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	6
6.	<u>RESULTS</u>	8
7.	<u>DISCUSSION</u>	13
8.	<u>POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY</u>	16
9.	<u>REFERENCES</u>	16
10.	<u>APPENDICES</u>	18

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1. SUMMARY

A study was undertaken to identify useful methods for measuring progress in English language proficiency among students at the Yemen-America Language Institute (YALI) in Sana'a, Yemen. The study was also to identify factors critical to such progress and possible profiles of attitudes and demographic characteristics of the students.

A questionnaire was constructed and administered to the YALI student body in 1987. Other information about the students was collected and tabulated. Measures of English progress were: (a) gain on TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) over a two-term period, (b) grades in YALI classes, and (c) attendance. The factors thought most likely to influence English progress were: (i) age, (ii) number of dependents, (iii) motivation, (iv) self-esteem, (v) learning style, and (vi) level of enrollment in YALI.

The results show a negative correlation between factors (i) and (ii) and TOEFL gain. There is a positive correlation between factors (iii) and (iv), but although they are associated with high TOEFL gain rather than low, no cause and effect mechanism can be inferred. There is a negative correlation between factor (v) and TOEFL gain for those with low gain. Factors (v) and (vi) show a positive correlation for those with high gain, but there is no correlation between factor (vi) and TOEFL gain.

The results are interpreted to show that students in the program who succeed in class are highly motivated and able to adjust their learning styles, characteristics which promote academic success. At the same time no one characteristic correlates positively with TOEFL gain.

It is demonstrated that there is no one readily quantifiable measure of English progress, at least in this setting, but that a combination of measures does indicate such progress. Some factors emerge that are associated with slow progress, while others rise along with TOEFL gain. Grades and attendance, while indicative of increased English language proficiency, do not correlate with TOEFL gain. These factors can be taken into account to construct profiles of YALI students: those who complete the program quickly, those who are likely to succeed with greater expenditure of time and effort, and those unlikely to succeed. While the first group can succeed on TOEFL alone, the second group's progress is more accurately evaluated by a combination of measures. The writer believes that an academic readiness checklist could be constructed, using TOEFL and other measures, to evaluate a student's readiness for academic study.

2. BACKGROUND

The Yemen-America Language Institute (YALI), at the time of writing (Fall 1989), is an intensive English language institute operated in Sana'a, Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) under contract from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) by the English Language Institute (ELI) of Oregon State University (OSU). The contract is to run for the five years beginning July 1985 and ending 1990.

YALI was designed as and currently operates as a program to teach English to Yemeni nationals who are beneficiaries of USAID scholarships to study on a short or long term basis in the United States. These individuals are nominated by Yemeni official entities and awarded scholarships by USAID after having met other qualifications, mostly related to their academic background. It is a USAID policy that such individuals demonstrate a degree of English proficiency by scoring at least 500 on TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) before being "called forward" to study in the United States, where in some cases they improve their English further to meet the higher admission standards at some institutions. (At one time TOEFL 500 was an almost universal admission requirement for non-native English speakers at U.S. universities; most have now increased their TOEFL requirement, especially for graduate students.)

YALI is seen by USAID as crucial to their goal of fostering development in the YAR through human resource development and training of people for leadership roles in government, agriculture, business, education, and industry. The majority of USAID scholarship recipients (usually referred to as PTs, or participant trainees) are to go to the United States for study at the undergraduate or graduate level and have a clearly defined and responsible employment position awaiting them on completion of their degree. In 1987 the YALI student body were 40% prospective undergraduate students, 40% prospective master's degree students, and 20% other (PhD or short-term training).

The YALI curriculum, as with the English Language Institute curriculum upon which it was based, is cumulative in nature and oriented towards academic proficiency as well as test scores. The assumption that satisfactory progress through the various levels (see below), when accompanied by sufficient cultural adaptation and cognitive development,

prepares students for success in higher education, is fundamental to all English language programs, is attested to by the undeniable success of many thousands of such students, and is supported by the professional bodies with the greatest expertise in the field, namely TESOL (Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language) and NAFSA (National Association for Foreign Student Affairs). (See for example the "CIEP Guidelines," produced by the Consortium of Intensive English Programs of NAFSA.)

3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Over the years of YALI's operation prior to and during the ELI contract it was noticed that the time that the PTs took to learn enough English to reach TOEFL 500 could not be accurately predicted. It was estimated from the way that the curriculum was outlined that from the time of first enrollment at YALI the PT would normally require one term per level (a term lasts about 10-11 weeks, giving four terms in a year). A PT with very limited English at time of first enrollment would therefore be expected to follow a seven-level course of study at YALI, taking some 20 months. The levels are named and described as follows:

<u>Level</u>	<u>Description</u>
Beginning	(Only for very low proficiency PTs)
Basic	(Not held every term)
Low Intermediate	(Where most PTs enter)
High Intermediate	(Usually highest enrollment)
Pre-Advanced	
Advanced	(Exit requires 450 TOEFL)
Post-Advanced	(Exit requires 500 TOEFL)
University	(From 500 TOEFL until departure)

It has been common for a proportion of students not to be able to progress through the program at the required rate, and either have to repeat levels or even drop out altogether. Many reasons have been suggested for the PTs' failure (if indeed it is truly theirs!) to make "adequate progress" towards what is perceived as a reasonable goal. The first is usually that in Yemen they are making less use of English in everyday settings than would be the case in the U.S. The next is that they are often so distracted by the demands of family, local culture, peer groups, and former (or current or future) employers that learning English has to take a back seat. A third is that the

prospect of actually traveling to the U.S. is so far off in the future (for the low English proficiency students) that they may find more immediate career or educational opportunities harder to resist.

At the same time it is undeniable that many PTs are undergoing tremendous internal stress. Dunnett (1981) believes that students from traditional societies who are studying scientific and technical subjects (and by traditional Yemeni standards modern forms of business and education could be seen as on a par with scientific and technical subjects) may be in conflict with their traditional values. Magrath (1981) notes that students from Middle Eastern backgrounds may feel the clash between modernism and traditional Islamic values very deeply and experience one of two possible effects, (i) an awakening or (ii) anomie and a return to a state reminiscent of childhood. Coelho, cited in Lam (1982), mentions the "sudden explosion of major environmental changes that are experienced in terms of loss, and disruption of support systems that validate one's self-esteem" characteristic of foreign students in the United States, feelings which may well be experienced to a lesser extent by students entering YALI, who often have to move many miles away from home and family.

From the point of view of the sponsors (USAID and Yemeni government) and in order to enhance the functioning of YALI, it was believed to be desirable to find ways to avoid allowing scarce resources (e.g., YALI classroom space) to be absorbed by those less likely to succeed. At the same time it was also held to be necessary not to deny an opportunity to any person who might by superior effort overcome personal or societal disadvantages. These needs are consistent with concerns reported by Jenkins (1984) to be widely held by USAID administrators, who met to discuss "persistent problems" related to cost-effectiveness, student variables, evaluation procedures, including the role of tests in measuring progress in English, and the relative costs and benefits of programs based in the U.S. and overseas.

Accordingly it was proposed that a study be undertaken to identify:

- (i) useful methods for measuring progress in English language proficiency specifically among Yemeni learners of English;
- (ii) critical factors affecting progress towards improving English language proficiency as measured by standardized test results (such as TOEFL) or otherwise;
- (iii) possible profiles of the attitudes and demographic characteristics possessed by successful language learners in the YALI context.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(A) AFFECTIVE VARIABLES AND LANGUAGE LEARNING.

Studies concerned with affective variables have focused on what the major ones are, what influence they have on language learning, and what response is required on the part of the institution. In two representative recent examples, Jenkins lists the most relevant variables as: self-confidence, empathy, age, motivation, and attitude (p.7), while Ely lists four constructs which are hypothesized as predictors of language learning ability: risktaking, sociability, strength of motivation, and discomfort (p.4). Attention has also been paid to the cultural context of learning (Dunnett, p.54), the assumptions and expectations brought to the activity by the teacher or the institution (Paige, p.94), and the difference between integrative and instrumental motivation (England, p.24).

Jenkins finds that "[t]he interrelationships between student variables and language learning and development training program requirements form a complex pattern and present a number of unanswered questions which will continue to attract the attention of both sponsors and teachers of ESL," and calls for more research (p.9). Ely finds a positive effect from risktaking and a negative effect from discomfort, concluding that "simply exhorting students to take more risks and participate more may not be effective" (p.23). Recommended institutional responses include better orientation, more interaction with Americans, better evaluation procedures, and above all a better understanding of the students' background. It is not explicitly stated that these responses are as necessary in programs located in students' home countries as they are in those located in the U.S.

(B) TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE).

TOEFL is the most widely accepted measure of English language proficiency for the purpose of admission of non-native speakers of English to colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. The nature of the test, its reliability and validity, and its statistical characteristics are fully described in the TOEFL Test and Score Manual (Educational Testing Service, 1987). Use of TOEFL for assessing growth in English proficiency is also common and widely accepted (Swinton, 1983).

After lengthy investigation and debate, TOEFL has added a writing

component (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1983), but the greatest question surrounding the TOEFL is that it is a test of discrete points of language knowledge rather than one of communicative competence (Spolsky, 1968; Oller, 1973). ETS is considering adapting TOEFL to reflect the need for testing of communicative competence (Duran, et al, 1985). In the meantime TOEFL is still regarded as a valid measure of English language proficiency, although corresponding to the second of the three trends identified by Yalden (1978), namely (1) "prescientific" language testing, based purely on teacher judgment, (2) "psychometric-structuralist" testing, based on discrete-point analysis of language skills, and (3) "integrative-socio-linguistic" testing of "overall language proficiency, according to the view that an underlying general language competence is common to all of the modalities of language use." Nonetheless Yalden found TOEFL appropriate for admissions decisions regarding foreign applicants to Canadian universities and colleges. As such it is in almost universal use today, despite abuses such as those summarized by Homburg (1980).

5. METHODOLOGY

(A) Hypotheses to be verified.

In order to approach the questions posed in Part 2 above, we can formulate the following hypotheses:

- (1) That satisfactory measures exist for assessing degrees of progress towards English language proficiency in the Yemeni setting;
- (2) That significant correlations exist between certain measureable student characteristics and progress in English language proficiency as shown by TOEFL scores and otherwise; and
- (3) That profiles of students as language learners can be constructed which account for ease or difficulty in learning English as a foreign language in the specific situation at YALI.

(B) Data Collection.

(1) Certain student characteristics were identified as potentially useful in testing the above hypotheses.

(2) A questionnaire was constructed to (a) elicit student responses to questions on the above characteristics and (b) allow for weighting for characteristics seen as more crucial. (See Appendix for questionnaire and weighting scheme.)

(3) The questionnaire was discussed with YALI staff and the highest level of students at YALI (University level) with regard to cultural appropriateness of wording and need for translation into Arabic.

(4) With a view to avoiding the filtering effects mentioned by Starr and Wilson (p.129), the questionnaire was prepared with an Arabic translation (checked for accuracy against the English version by another bilingual individual) and administered to all current YALI students (n=69).

(5) Teacher-generated data regarding certain student characteristics, such as punctuality and motivation, were collected.

(6) Results of the questionnaire were tabulated and compared with demographic and other information about students (grades, attendance, test scores) already available to this researcher on file or on computer.

(7) The original list of student characteristics was reduced to more manageable proportions, with the emphasis on those characteristics having the greatest potential for ease of interpretation and correlation (positive or negative) with progress in English. The previous studies mentioned above were of assistance in reducing the number of characteristics to be studied.

(8) Statistical operations were conducted to find means and standard deviations for the appropriate fields. Other fields were used as filters (for example, the field labeled "Sponsor" enabled only those students sponsored by a certain agency, e.g. the Ministry of Education, to be selected for analysis). Correlations between student characteristics and measures of progress in English were sought.

6. RESULTS

(A) General.

When considering the results as obtained and entered in the data base, it becomes apparent that some student characteristics are more useful than others due to difficulty of interpretation of some (e.g., question #7, asking the student to rank-order which activities helped him most to learn English).

The characteristics that appeared to indicate good progress in English and at the same time to correlate best with each other were:

- I am making good progress at YALI (question #8 on student questionnaire),
- (a self-description of motivation: #10),
- I find ways to practice English (#12),
- YALI helps me to achieve goals (#16),
- I enjoy studying at YALI (#17),
- I am comfortable taking any test (#20),
- I am comfortable taking TOEFL (#21), and
- I am comfortable using English (#28).

Others that were removed from this list were:

- How long I anticipated I would stay at YALI (question #4),
- How long I anticipate I will still stay at YALI (#5), and
- I am comfortable being around foreigners (#29).

(B) TOEFL Gain.

Gain on TOEFL was measured by subtracting from the score obtained on either the Institutional TOEFL of April 1987 or the International TOEFL of May 1987 (or the higher of the two) the score obtained on the November 1986 Institutional TOEFL (or where this was not available, the score on the January 1987 Institutional TOEFL). In 21 cases out of 69 this figure could not be calculated as the student was relatively new to YALI and had not taken the 11/86 or the 1/87 test. Thus 48 students were identified as subjects for some of the purposes of this study.

(C) Grades and Attendance.

Other frequently used and intuitively significant measures of English language progress, recorded by programs and requested by sponsors, are: grades awarded for performance in class and attendance. These were measured for the YALI students in this study as follows:

(i) Grades: an average was taken of the grades awarded in all classes at YALI for Terms II to IV, 1986-87 school year (September 1986 to April 1987). Separate grades are awarded by the teachers in the classes the student attends, namely Grammar, Foundation, Listening, and Reading/TOEFL Skills;

(ii) Attendance: an average was calculated of the student's attendance in class (including compulsory skill lab hours) for Terms II to IV, 1986-87 school year. (It should be noted that attendance at YALI is compulsory in all classes and that students can be dismissed from the program for poor attendance.)

The average TOEFL gain for all 47 students was 38.2 points (one student was excluded from consideration here as his average attendance figure of 47% showed that he had ceased to attend YALI, even though a TOEFL score was reported for him). The average figure for grades was 84.4 (compared with an average of 85.2 for all 69), and the average attendance figure was 91.3 (90.1 for all 69). When these were compared with TOEFL gain, the following correlations were found:

Table 1

(n=47)	TOEFL gain	Grades	Attendance
TOEFL gain	- -	.22090 (p=.1319)	.13625 (p=.3641)
Grades		--	.76777 (p=.0000)

Thus it appears that although grades and attendance correlate well with each other, neither can be used to predict the rate of TOEFL score gain.

(D) Age and Number of Dependents.

Of the student-reported measures previously thought most likely to influence English language progress in a negative fashion, the first to be considered were age (question #23) and number of dependents (question #30). The average age of the 48 students with reported TOEFL gains was

26.2 years (s.d.=4.1) (27.4 for all 69, s.d.=4.7, showing that the 21 later entrants were older on average); the average weighted score on the "number of dependents" question was 2.8 (s.d.=2.3) (3.1 for all 69, s.d.=2.6), indicating an actual number of dependents of three or more. When these were compared with TOEFL gain, the following correlations were found:

Table 2

(n=47)	TOEFL gain	Age	Dependents
TOEFL gain	- -	-.13703 (p=.3557)	-.20823 (p=.1520)
Age		--	.53827 (p=.0002)

Both of these characteristics are associated with low TOEFL gain, but neither one alone correlates negatively to a high enough degree to account for lack of success on TOEFL. However, the high correlation between them, which would be expected, is noteworthy.

(E) Motivation and Index of Self-Esteem.

TOEFL gain was measured against motivation (as self-reported by the student, Q.#10: a visual check showed only two cases where the student assessment and the teacher assessment varied greatly), and against the following five measures, equally weighted and combined into one index (called for our purposes here "Self-Esteem"): how the student is progressing (Q.#8), motivation (as just mentioned: Q.#10), the extent to which the student believes that YALI helps him achieve his personal goals (Q.#16), how he enjoys studying at YALI (Q.#17), and the extent to which he feels comfortable taking tests (Q.#20).

In order to help certain findings to emerge more clearly, the correlations are in these cases grouped according to TOEFL gain: Group (1) has TOEFL gain of more than 30 ("HIGH," n=33), Group (2) is everybody ("ALL," n=47), Group (3) has TOEFL gain of less than 30 ("LOW," n=14).

Table 3

(3A): Correlation of TOEFL Gain and Motivation:

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	.26129	.12884	.02843
Significance (p=):	.1384	.3922	.8854

(3B): Correlation of TOEFL Gain and Self-Esteem:

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	.24381	.10629	-.15238
Significance (p=):	.1681	.4838	.6081

(3C): Correlation of Motivation and Self-Esteem:

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	.89588	.89056	.90168
Significance (p=):	<u>.0000</u>	<u>.0000</u>	<u>.0001</u>

These figures indicate that Motivation and Self-Esteem correlate extremely well (the first accounts for one-fifth of the second), and that both are associated to some degree with high TOEFL gain rather than low. But it would be erroneous to suppose that either one produces high TOEFL gain: indeed, the cause and effect mechanism could work the other way around.

(F) Learning Style and Level of Enrollment.

The next characteristics to be examined were Learning Style (composed of two equally weighted self-assessed characteristics: willingness to guess and reading speed) and Level (level of enrollment at the end of the period being studied). Learning Style is quantified here as a number between 3 (low) and 14 (high), with an average of 8.51 and s.d. of 2.47. Level is shown on a scale indicating 2 (low: Basic) through 6 (high: Post-Advanced) with an average of 4.95 and s.d. of 0.94. The same three groups are used as in Table 3.

Table 4

(4A): Correlation of TOEFL Gain and Learning Style

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	-.10357	-.08627	-.53755
Significance (p=):	.5729	.5711	<u>.0454</u>

(4B): Correlation of TOEFL Gain and Level

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	-.02044	.11724	.10858
Significance (p=):	.8756	.4384	.7106

(4C): Correlation of Learning Style and Level

Group:	1: HIGH	2: ALL	3: LOW
Description:	gain >30	all	gain <30
Correlation:	.46435	.30057	-.10087
Significance (p=):	<u>.0065</u>	<u>.0378</u>	.7283

Learning style shows a high negative correlation with TOEFL Gain for those with low TOEFL Gain, and a high positive correlation with Level for those with high TOEFL Gain. What little correlation there is between TOEFL Gain and Level is more negative with high gain, illustrating what is often called the "plateau effect," i.e., that it is relatively harder to add points to a high score than to a low one.

These facts (1) tend to confirm what has been proved in other studies, i.e., that a less adventurous learning style (in general) contributes less to language learning, (2) suggest that as the more successful students continue in the program they do adjust their learning style, (3) show that the higher the level or the TOEFL score, the more difficult it is for the student to continue to produce increases in TOEFL score, and finally (4) suggest that some factor is at work producing increases in TOEFL scores other than those mentioned.

7. DISCUSSION

(A) Hypotheses

(1) Hypothesis #1:

That satisfactory measures exist for assessing degrees of progress towards English language proficiency in the Yemeni setting.

The results appear to indicate that no one readily quantifiable measure constitutes an absolute measure of degrees of progress towards English language proficiency in the Yemeni setting. On the other hand, there are several measures that are useful in some combination: TOEFL gain, grades and attendance, motivation, and others.

I believe that it would therefore be inappropriate to use one absolute measure -- low TOEFL scores -- to deny students access to education in the English medium under the erroneous assumption that such scores prove a student incapable of benefitting from such instruction. If TOEFL is used in combination with other measures, a profile may begin to emerge that indicates a sufficient degree of English language proficiency for the student to undertake certain activities, such as academic study at a college or university.

At one time a score of 500 on TOEFL was held to be sufficient proof of English language proficiency; later a score of 500 or more came to be seen as a necessary but insufficient condition, with proficiency in writing and speaking and other factors such as cross-cultural adaptability coming under consideration. It may be that soon TOEFL 500 will be seen as just one way of demonstrating English language proficiency, with other alternative methods open to the student.

A useful response to this situation is to attempt to construct the measure of English language proficiency that would be the most useful to sponsors, universities, and others. Alternative approaches to the TOEFL cut-off score have been tried, such as the "TOEFL Review Board" occasionally used at YALI in which a student is set the task of writing a paper and defending it orally before a panel of "experts" (someone knowledgeable in the student's field, an English language instructor, and two others). In this case the student needs to have a TOEFL score approaching 500 in order to benefit from this procedure. An "Academic Readiness Checklist" of possible measures and

degrees of proficiency attained on each, such as those used in admitting U.S. students to many colleges and universities, once developed and tested in the field, might provide a more useful range of information.

(2) Hypothesis #2:

That significant correlations exist between certain measureable student characteristics and progress in English language proficiency as shown by TOEFL scores and otherwise.

The correlations that emerge tend to support the following assertions:

- (a) Some characteristics, exemplified here by age and number of dependents, are associated with low TOEFL gain.
- (b) Some characteristics, exemplified here by motivation and self-esteem, rise with TOEFL gain, but may be either a cause or an effect.
- (c) Some characteristics, such as learning style and level of enrollment, are indicators of length of time spent in the program but are not necessarily reflected in high TOEFL gain.
- (d) Some characteristics, such as grades and attendance, are indicative of increased English language proficiency and yet do not correlate with TOEFL gain.

If increased English language proficiency is defined a priori as gain on TOEFL, no measureable student characteristics have been found that correlate with it to an acceptable extent. If increased English language proficiency is defined in terms of progress towards functional ability to perform tasks required in real life (in the academic setting or beyond), it is measured by grades and attendance just as much as by TOEFL gain. The task that opens up before us is to construct a model or procedure using all available information that determines the point at which the degree of readiness for academic study required has been reached.

(3) Hypothesis #3:

That profiles of students as language learners can be constructed which account for ease or difficulty in learning English as a foreign language in the specific situation at YALI.

The information available to the program about the student's background, affective factors, progress in class, and gain on standardized tests can be used to construct a profile of the student as a language learner. The profile would take into account the factors mentioned in 2(a) above, which would tend to slow the student's progress; factors such as extensive previous travel abroad or exposure to English, which normally accelerate the

student's progress; motivation and cross-cultural awareness as perceived by the classroom teachers; and even perhaps response to stressful situations. In the YALI context other factors would appropriately be included.

An analysis of experiences in the YALI context suggests that three profiles are prevalent. First, there are the "fast track" students who enjoy more of the accelerating factors, who may not necessarily enter the program at a high level but who will most likely complete the program in a relatively short time. Second, there are the "slow track" students whose progress may at times be slow and painful but who can compensate for the slowing factors by tapping into other resources, be they intellectual, personal, or societal. Last, there are the "no track" students who face insuperable obstacles and who self-deselect or are eventually dropped from the program.

I believe that it will not be possible to construct a profile that will assign the student to one or other of these groups until the student has spent as much as two terms at the program. To do otherwise would be to deny the student the chance to demonstrate his ability to draw on his resources in order to meet a new, challenging, and unfamiliar situation or to create overoptimistic expectations. However, the construction of this profile would be useful as an aid to deciding to what extent test scores rather than classroom progress should determine readiness for academic work, as the "slow track" learner may well be the one who can succeed with the language skills demonstrated by grades rather than test scores.

(B) Implications

If an "Academic Readiness Checklist" as described above were instituted, I believe the following results would be obtained: (1) greater responsibility for the program in maintaining records of grades and attendance and in monitoring growth in many ways, as this would have a greater bearing on the students' future; (2) less "TOEFL mania" among students, as this would no longer be the absolute measure of English language progress; (3) greater cooperation between the program and the sponsoring agency due to their shared responsibility in constructing the above mentioned checklist and their shared interest in the student as his profile develops; and (4) a product would emerge that would be useful to many institutions in the U.S. and beyond.

At a time when no one measure of academic aptitude is used in isolation for admission of U.S. students to undergraduate or graduate study, and when

makers of standardized tests are under pressure to justify use of their results in preference to other measures or indeed at all (see Crouse and Trusheim, p.50 and p.163), I believe that a methodology combining TOEFL with other evaluative measures of English language proficiency to indicate degrees of readiness for academic study, once shown to be effective and reliable, would evoke interest and achieve wide acceptance.

8. POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

(1) The question of what degree of English language proficiency is necessary for subsequent success in academic study has come up again and again, and perhaps will never be put to rest. A study that would meet the criteria of Munsell (1982) (i.e., practicality and relevance to the needs of students and program) might take a longitudinal view of the academic careers of individuals with varying degrees of English language proficiency as documented in various ways, and attempt to correlate the two.

(2) Whether TOEFL alone should be used to measure English language proficiency is another question that could be more satisfactorily answered. A broader study based on the records of more than one intensive English language program, perhaps in a variety of settings, might help determine a weighting method which will be helpful to students and institutions.

(3) With the cooperation of sponsoring agencies it would be possible to compare the success rates of students at colleges or universities as a result of a call-forward TOEFL score either higher or lower than those achieved as a result of the use of TOEFL 500.

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10. APPENDICES

- (1) Questionnaire as administered to YALI students, 4/87
- (2) Weighting system
- (3) Data base construction

YALI STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Student:

Please write in an answer or circle the letter of your choice. Thank you for answering these questions carefully and thoughtfully.

عزيزي الطالب :-

الرجاء كتابة الاجابه او عمل دائره حول الحرف الذي تختاره كاجابه .

Ion C. Palmer.

ايان بالمر

شكرا لك اجابتك للأسئلة بعناية واهتمام .

Section I: Your Education

الجزء الاول : دراستك

(1) How many years of education have you completed? (1) كم عدد السنوات الدراسيه التي اكملتها ؟ _____ years سنوات

(2) In which city did you attend high school? (2) في اى مدينه تلقيت دراستك الثانويه ؟ _____

(3) Where did you attend a university? (3) اين تلقيت دراستك الجامعيه ؟
(A) Yemen في اليمن
(B) Another Arab country في دوله عربيه
(C) Another country outside the Arab world في دوله غير العالم العربي
(D) I have not attended a university. لم التحق بالجامعه

Section II: Your Study at YALI الجزء الثاني :- دراستك في المعهد اليمني الامريكي للغة

(4) When you first came to YALI, how long did you think you would have to spend at YALI? (4) عند مجئك الى المعهد لاول مره كم المده التي كنت تعتقد بانك ستقضيها في المعهد

_____ months أشهر

(٥) كم المدة التي تعتقد الآن سوف تقضيها في المعهد للحصول على درجة ٥٠٠ في اختبار التوفل ؟

(5) How long do you think now that you will still spend at YALI to achieve a TOEFL score of 500?

أشهر _____ months

(٦) هل تشعر بانك تحرر تقدما جيدا بدراستك اللغة الانجليزية ؟

6) Do you feel that you are making good progress in learning English?

- (A) Yes, very much نعم ، كثيرا جدا
(B) Somewhat الى حد ما
(C) Not very ليس كثيرا
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(٧) أي من الوسائل التالية تساعدك اكثر لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

(7) Which of the following help you most to learn English? Mark 1, 2, 3 in order.

- (A) YALI teachers مدرسين المعهد
(B) YALI methods طرق التدريس بالمعهد
(C) YALI textbooks الكتب الدراسية بالمعهد
(D) Lab. hours ساعات المعامل الدراسية
(E) My own efforts مجهوداتي الخاصة

(٨) كيف تصف دافئك الدراسي في الفصل ؟

(8) How would you describe your motivation in class?

- (A) Very good جيد جدا
(B) Pretty good جيد
(C) Not very good ليس جيد
(D) Not good at all ليس جيد اطلاقا

(٩) كم من الفرص المتاحة تنتهزها لممارسة اللغة الانجليزية ؟

(9) How many opportunities do you look for to practice English?

- (A) Very many متعددة جدا
(B) Somewhat الى حد ما
(C) Only a few قليلا فقط
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(١٠) اذكر اطوبين او ثلاثة تمارس فيهم اللغة الانجليزية خارج المعهد ؟

(10) Name two or three ways in which you practice your English outside of YALI.

(١١) كيف تشعر عندما تسعى الى التخمين في حالة عدم معرفتك الاجابه للسؤال ؟

(11) How do you feel about guessing if you don't know the answer to a question?

- (A) I don't guess لا اضمن
(B) I don't like to guess, but sometimes I do لا احب التخمين، لكن احيانا
(C) Guessing is OK التخمين موافق عليه
(D) Guessing is a good idea التخمين فكره جيده

(١٢) تعلم اللغة الانجليزية للدراسة في الولايات المتحدة مهمة شاقه - من هو في رايك المسئول عن تحمل هذه المسئوليه ؟

(12) Learning English to study in the U.S. is a difficult task. Whose responsibility is it that you complete this task?

- (A) YALI's مسئولية المعهد
(B) The YALI teachers' مسئولية مدرسين المعهد
(C) My own مسئوليتي
(D) Other: مسئولية آخرون

(١٣) احد الطلاب قال " عندما كنت صغيرا في المدرسة - الويله التي درست لندا للتعلم لم تكن كافيه بصورة

(13) One student said, "When I was a child in school, the way they taught us to learn wasn't good enough." How much does this apply to you?

- (A) Very much كثيرا جدا
(B) Somewhat الى حد ما
(C) Not very much ليس كثيرا
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(١٤) كم سرعتك في القراءة ((قراءة اللغة الانجليزية)

- (A) Very fast سريع جدا
(B) Fairly fast سرعة معتدله
(C) Not very fast ليست سريعة
(D) Not fast at all ليست سريعة على الاطلاق

(١٥) كم من الساعات في الاسبوع عادة تقضيها لاستذكار اللغة الانجليزية ؟

(15) How many hours a week do you usually spend studying English (not counting your time at YALI)?

(١٦) كم يساعدك المعهد لتحقيق اهدافك الشخصية ؟

(16) How much is YALI helping you to achieve your personal goals?

- (A) Not at all ليس اطلاقا
(B) A little قليلا
(C) Quite a lot بموره كثيره
(D) Very much كثيرا جدا

(17) Do you enjoy studying at YALI?

- (A) Very much كثيرا جدا
(B) Quite a lot بعموره كثيره
(C) A little قليلا
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(١٧) هل تستمتع بدراسك في المعهد ؟

Section III: Taking Tests

الجزء الثالث: اداء الامتحانات

(18) How many times have you taken TOEFL at YALI?

(١٨) كم عدد المرات التي اديت فيها اختبار التوفل في المعهد ؟

(19) How many times have you taken TOEFL in total?

(١٩) كم عدد المرات الاجمالية التي اديت فيها اختبار التوفل ؟

(20) How comfortable do you feel about taking any kind of test?

(٢٠) ما مقدار الراحة التي تشعر بها حين اداءك اى نوع من الاختبار ؟

- (A) Very much كثيرا جدا
(B) Somewhat الى حد ما
(C) Not very ليس كثيرا
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(21) How comfortable do you feel about taking TOEFL?

(٢١) ما مقدار الراحة التي تشعر بها حين اداءك اختبار التوفل ؟

- (A) Not at all ليس اطلاقا
(B) Not very ليس كثيرا
(C) Somewhat الى حد ما
(D) Yes, very much نعم كثيرا جدا

Section IV: Your Background

الجزء الرابع : خلفيتك الثقافية :

(22) Who is sponsoring you to study at YALI?

(٢٢) من الذى يدعم دراستك في المعهد ؟

(23) How old were you when you started studying at YALI?

(٢٣) كم كان عمرك عند بدء دراستك بالمعهد ؟

(٢٤) كم عدد المرات التي سافرت فيها خارج اليمن ؟
(24) How many times have you traveled outside of Yemen?

(٢٥) كم اللغات التي تتحدثها ((بدون اللغة العربية والانجليزية))
(25) How many other languages (apart from Arabic and English) do you know?

(٢٦) كم عدد السنوات الدراسية التي اكتملها والدك ؟
(26) How many years of education did your father complete?

(٢٧) هل اسرتك تشجعك لمواصلة الدراسة على المدى البعيد ؟
(27) Is your family in favor of your going on to further education?
(A) Not really ليس حقا
(B) Yes, somewhat نعم ، الى حد ما
(C) Yes, very much نعم ، بصورة كثيرة

(٢٨) هل تشعر بارتياح لممارستك لغة اجنبية ((مثلا : اللغة الانجليزية))
(28) Do you feel comfortable using a foreign language (e.g. English)?
(A) Yes, very much نعم كثيرا جدا
(B) Somewhat الى حد ما
(C) Not very ليس كثيرا
(D) Not at all ليس اطلاقا

(٢٩) هل تشعر بارتياح للعمل مع اشخاص من اقطار اجنبية ؟ ((على المثال - امريكيين))
(29) Do you feel comfortable working with people from foreign countries (e.g. Americans)?
(A) Not at all ليس اطلاقا
(B) Not very ليس كثيرا
(C) Somewhat الى حد ما
(D) Yes, very much نعم كثيرا

(٣٠) كم عددا الاشخاص الذين ترعاهم ((زوجة/زوج - ابناء - آخرون)) ؟
(30) How many dependents (spouse, children, others) do you have?

(٣١) هل لديك التزامات لاعمال اخرى تشغلها خارج نطاق المعهد ؟
(31) Other work responsibilities which you have outside of YALI include:
(A) Full-time teaching تدريس كامل في ساعات العمل المعتادة
(B) Part-time teaching تدريس جزء من اليوم
(C) Full-time job (not teaching) وظيفة كاملة ((غير نطاق التدريس)
(D) Part-time job (not teaching) وظيفة جزء من اليوم ((" " ")
(E) Other: اعمال اخرى

(F) None

(٣٢) كيف تؤثر التزاماتك خارج المعهد على دراستك ؟

(32) How do your responsibilities outside of YALI affect your studying?

- (A) They help me study تساعدني على الدراسة
(B) They have no effect ليس لها أي تأثير

(C) They take some time away from studying تستغرق جزء من وقت الاستذكار

(D) They take a lot of time away from studying تستغرق وقت كثير من المذاكرة

(٣٣) كم عدد الأشخاص المقربين لاسرتك ((افراد اسرتك)) (والديك - ابناءك) لديك يعيشون مسافة تبعد عن صنعاء اكثر من ١٠٠ كيلو متر ؟

(33) How many close family members (parents, children) do you have who are living more than 100 km. from Sana'a?

(٣٤) أي من الحالات التالية تصف بصورة دقيقة تنظيم معيشتك أثناء دراستك بالمعهد ؟

(34) Which of these most accurately describes your living arrangements while you are studying at YALI:

- (A) Living alone or with parents معيشتك لوحده او مع والديك
(B) Living with spouse and/or with children معيشتك مع زوجتك/زوجك او اولادك
(C) Living with parents and family معيشتك مع والديك واسرتك
(D) Living with brother/sister and family معيشتك مع اخوك/اخوتك والاسرة
(E) Other معيشتك مع آخرون

(٣٥) كم عدد الايام التي تغيبتها عن المعهد خلال الدورتين الماضيتين وذلك بسبب التزاماتك الاسرية ؟

(35) How many days have you been absent from YALI during the last two terms because of family responsibilities?

(٣٦) كم عدد الايام التي تغيبتها عن المعهد خلال الدورتين الماضيتين وذلك بسبب التزامات متعلقة بالعمل ؟

(36) How many days have you been absent from YALI during the last two terms because of work-related responsibilities?

(٣٧) كم عدد الايام التي تغيبتها عن المعهد خلال الدورتين الماضيتين وذلك نتيجة مشاكل متعلقة بترشيحك ؟

(37) How many days have you been absent from YALI during the last two terms because of problems related to your nomination?

(٣٨) ماهو الحقل الدراسي الذي تنوى دراسته ؟

(38) What is your proposed field of study?

(٣٩) مامدى قوة طموحك تجاه تخصصك في حقلك الدراسي ؟

(39) How strongly committed are you to your proposed field of study?

- (A) It's my lifelong career انها مهنتي على مدى الحياة
(B) It's what I want to do انه ما اريد عمله
(C) I think it's best for me اعتقد انه الافضل لي
(D) I might change my mind ربما اغير راي

(40) What is your proposed level of study? ماهو مستوى تخصصك الدراسي ؟

- (A) Undergraduate الدراسة الجامعية
(B) Graduate (Masters) درامات عليا ((الماجستير))
(C) Graduate (Doctorate) درامات عليا ((الدكتوراه))
(D) Short-term course دورات دراسية قصيرة
(E) Other آخر

(٤١) ماذا كان وضعك قبل مجئك الى المعهد ؟

(41) What was your situation before coming to YALI?

- (A) Full-time job in commerce or industry وظيفه كامله في مجال التجاره
(B) Full-time job in education وظيفه كامله في مجال التعليم
(C) Full-time job in government service وظيفه كامله في القطاع الحكومي
(D) Part-time job وظيفه في جزء من اليوم
(E) Student طالب
(F) Other (e.g. military service) وظيفه اخرى - خدمة الدفاع الوطني

(42) How often do you chew gat? (٤٢) كم عدد المرات التي تعفغ فيها القات ؟

- (A) Never ابدا
(B) Once a week مره في الاسبوع
(C) 2-3 times a week ٢ - ٣ مرات في الاسبوع
(D) More than 3 times a week اكثر من ٣ مرات في الاسبوع

++ Use the back of this page for any other comments ++

استخدم خلف هذه الصفحة لكتابة ملاحظات اخرى

APPENDIX 2

WEIGHTING SYSTEM

<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>ANSWER</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1	12 years	1	Years of education completed
	13-15 years	3	
	16 years	5	
	17 or more	9	
4	0-7 months	1	How long would spend at YALI
	8-11 months	3	
	12-15 months	5	
	16 or more	9	
5	0-5 months	1	How long still spend at YALI
	6-8 months	3	
	9-12 months	5	
	13 or more	9	
6,8,9,13, 14,17,20, 28,39	A	9	
	B	5	
	C	3	
	D	1	
11,16,21, 29,42	A	1	
	B	3	
	C	5	
	D	9	
15	0-14 hours	1	Hours studying English outside YALI
	15-24 hours	3	
	25-34 hours	5	
	35 or more	9	

<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>ANSWER</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
26	none, illiterate etc. 0 Koran school only 2 primary 3 secondary 5 beyond secondary 7 other, degree etc. 9		Father's education
27	A 1 B 5 C 9		Family in favor of further education
30	none 0 1 1 2-4 3 5-9 5 10 or more 9		No. of dependents
33	none 0 1-4 1 5-9 3 10-19 5 many (20 or more) 9		No. of close family members living more than 100 km. from Sana'a
34	A 1 B 3 C 5 D 7 E 9		Living arrangements while at YALI
38	(According to ETS standard code: field of study)		
40	A 3 B 5 C 7 D 1 E 9		Proposed level of study

APPENDIX 3

DATA BASE ORGANIZATION

(A) Student characteristics from questionnaire:

<u>DB Field #</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Questionnaire item #</u>
3	Years of education completed	1
5	Where attended university (or not)	3
6	Anticipated stay at YALI when came	4
7	Anticipated stay at YALI from now	5
8	Making good progress?	6
10	Self-description of motivation	8
13	Attitude towards guessing	11
16	Hours studying outside YALI	15
17	YALI helping to achieve goals	16
18	Enjoy studying at YALI	17
21	Comfortable taking any test	20
23	Sponsor	22
24	Age when began studying at YALI	23
26	# other languages (apart from Ar/Eng)	25
27	Years of education -- father	26
28	Family attitude towards education	27
29	Comfortable using English	28
31	Number of dependents	30
34	# family members living far away	33
35	Living arrangements	34
39	Proposed field of study	38
41	Proposed level of study	40
42	Situation before YALI	41
43	How often chew qat	42

(B) Student information from files:

<u>DB Field #</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
1	Student Number (e.g. Y196)
2	Class level, Term IV, 1986-87
11	Teacher description of motivation
49	Average Grade for Terms II-IV, 1986-7
51	Average Attendance, Terms II-IV, 1986-7
55	TOEFL Gain

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December 18, 1989.

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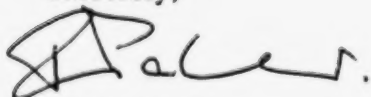
Dear Allen,

I enclose the final version of the research project entitled, "Yemeni Student Characteristics and Language Progress." I would like to thank you very much for all the support that you have extended to me during the life of this project.

I would also like gratefully to acknowledge the support of Karl Drobic, Director of Courses of YALI when this project was undertaken; Karl Schwartz, USAID/EHR, Sana'a; Vice-President George Keller of Oregon State University; and the Research Committee of Oregon State University for providing funding for this project. My thanks also to Mrs. Samira Al-Shalali, Miss Jamila Al-Kubati, Michael Witbeck, and JoAnn Casselberry for their valued assistance.

The students at the Yemen-America Language Institute are a unique group of individuals, with such a diversity of backgrounds and circumstances and yet typically a tremendous commitment to their branches of learning, their country, and to the pursuit of knowledge itself. This work is dedicated, respectfully and with a great sense of pride in their achievement, to them.

Sincerely,



Ian C. Palmer

Instructor,
English Language Institute.

ICP/ms